



blm - alaska

frontiers

managing public lands for multiple use

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I N S I D E

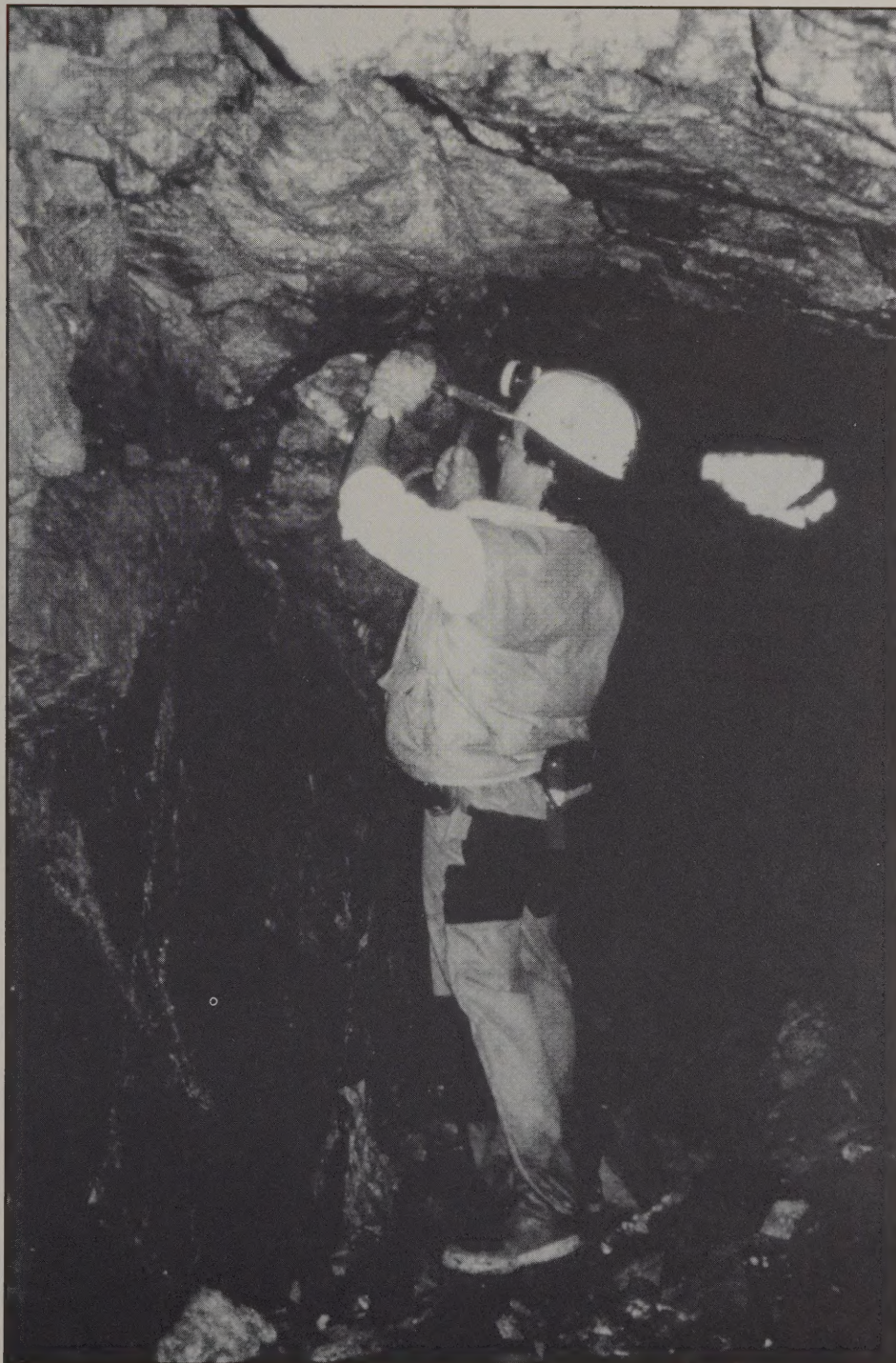
What a find! Skull of
extinct North American
lion discovered in Interior
Alaska

Archaeology students
study abandoned mining
sites of Coldfoot and Tofty

What I did on my summer
vacation—BLM is looking
for campground hosts

BLM takes on new
minerals responsibilities

(right) BLM welcomes 19 new employ-
ees, former members of the Bureau of
Mines, who will continue their work
on a variety of projects throughout
Alaska. Story on page 7.



When lions roamed Alaska...

Boy's canoe trip
yields a rare
fossil find



Panthera atrox

When Devan Foster saw a skull on the beach by Birch Creek in the Steese National Conservation Area north of Fairbanks, he thought it was a bear because the teeth were so big. He brought it to curators at the University of Alaska Museum, who took a look at it and knew better. It was the fossilized skull of an extinct North American lion, which roamed the northern regions 15,000 to 40,000 years ago.

"Fossilized skulls of lions are rare and this is one of the best preserved samples we have seen," says John Cook, a BLM archaeologist in Fairbanks. "It's the first that we are carbon dating."

Devan, a 12-year-old from Wasilla, discovered the trophy during a canoe trip on Birch Creek National Wild River last summer. The Fosters stopped at the museum in Fairbanks on their way home and saw fossilized lion skulls that looked similar to their find. They asked staff at the museum to examine it.

"When they realized what it was, they got really excited," Devan told the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*. The fossil is on display at the Southcentral Alaska Museum of Natural History in Eagle River, and will eventually return to the UA Museum on the Fairbanks campus.

Cook commended the Fosters for bringing their trophy to university officials, and making it available so others could view it and examine it.

*Fossilized skulls of lions
are rare and this is one of
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—John Cook,
BLM archaeologist

BLM manages the wild and scenic river corridor where the fossil was found. Under an agreement, the University of Alaska Museum curates fossilized remains found on BLM-managed public land.

Cook, who inspected the site in September, said the skull lay at the bottom of a 75-foot bluff that had recently eroded. More fossilized remains may be found in the muck, frozen soil and ice wedges. "It's a new site for Birch Creek and we'll be keeping an eye on it for future findings," Cook says.

Lions roamed Alaska's Interior during the Ice Age, according to Dr. Roland Gangloff, curator of Earth Science Collections at the museum. Similar in size and appearance to the modern East African

lion, they probably also hunted in prides, taking small mammoth, bison and horses. "They were high on the food chain, if not at the top," Gangloff said. As the ice receded, they vanished along with their prey.

Until now skulls of the big carnivores have been dated by comparing them with the age of other bones found in desposits with them. Cook said the skull found by Devan Foster was exceptionally well preserved, allowing carbon testing by a mass spectrometer. He sent a small sample of the skull to a laboratory in Miami, Florida, and expects results back soon.

—Andy Williams

The skull found by 12-year-old Devan Foster on Birch Creek is from an extinct North American lion. BLM archaeologist John Cook sent the fossil to a laboratory to determine its age.

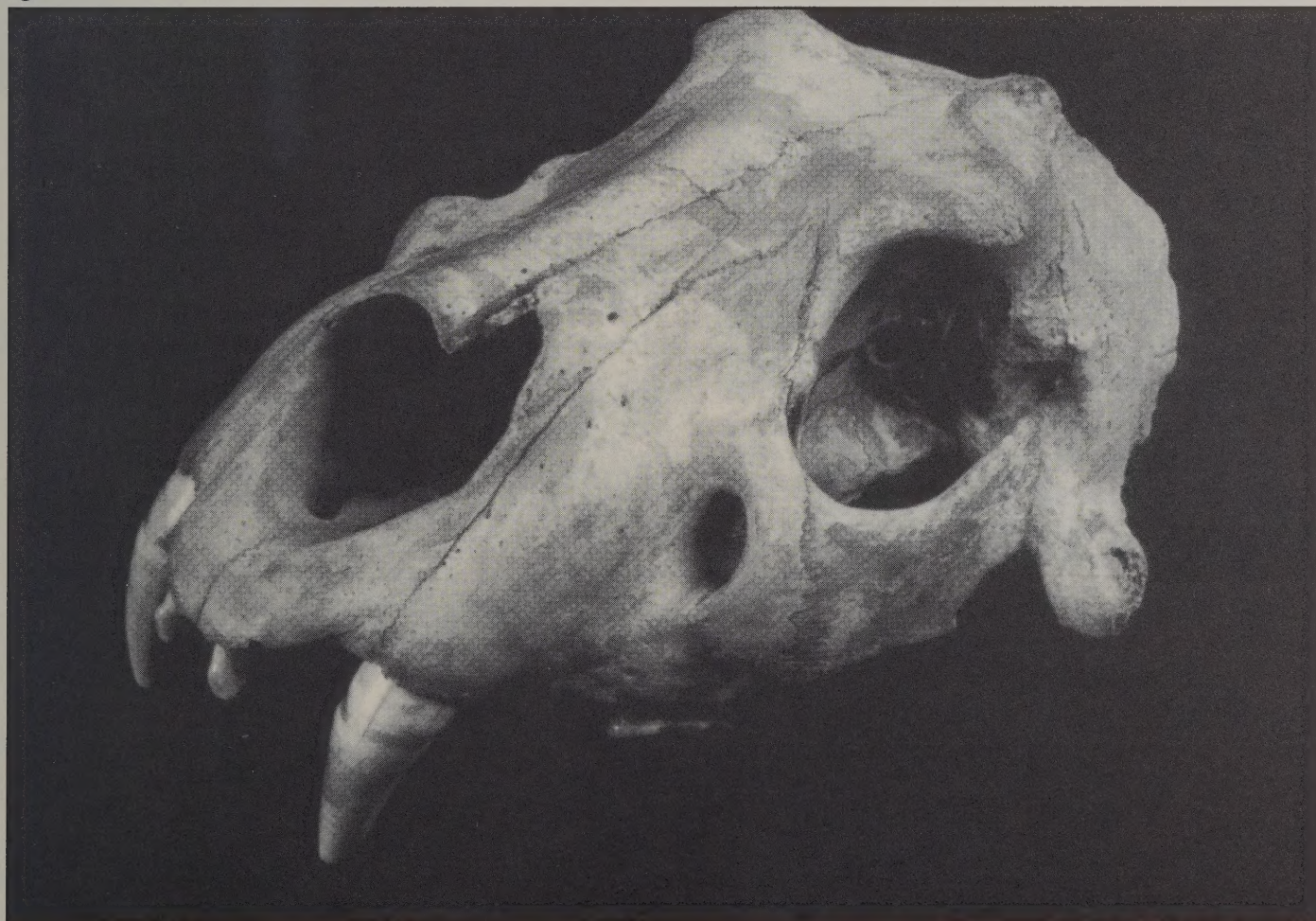


Photo courtesy of University of Alaska Museum

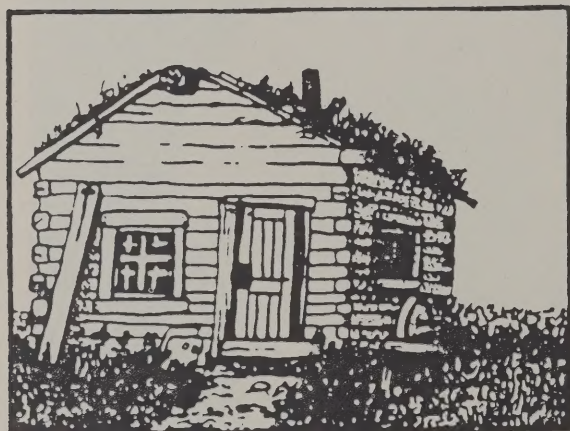


Archaeology students strike it rich at historic mining sites

Archaeology students use painstaking techniques to excavate the site of the old post office in the historic mining community of Tofty. The students spent the summer digging for artifacts at Tofty and Coldfoot on public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management.



Dan Gullickson



Student archeologists spent last summer digging for paydirt at two historic mining sites on public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management in Alaska.

In this case, the paydirt was nails, broken glass, pieces of leather, cans and other artifacts left by gold miners at the small communities of Tofty and Coldfoot early in this century.

Robin Mills, a doctoral student with the Department of Anthropology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, wants to study how different methods of abandonment influenced the type of artifacts found at historic sites. With the help of BLM archaeologists Howard Smith and John Cook, and 10 students in the archeology field class at UAF, Mills spent the summer digging for artifacts at the two mining sites.

They spent two weeks at Tofty, where miners built a settlement after gold was discovered in 1906. Tofty is about 15 miles northwest of Manley Hot Springs, at the end of the Elliott Highway. It flourished until the 1920s with a post office, three road houses, stores and dozens of other structures. As mining activity declined in the Manley area, the residents moved away. In 1969 a wildfire swept through the area,

burning down any existing structures.

After driving 260 miles north of Fairbanks on the Dalton Highway, the archeology field crew spent 10 weeks at Coldfoot, which was settled by gold miners in 1899. By 1902 the community included a post office, two stores, a gambling hall, two road houses, seven saloons and dozens of other buildings. It was largely abandoned by 1910, when miners moved a few miles north to Wiseman.

The students catalogued around 10,000 artifacts during the summer. "Coldfoot had a shorter occupation period and was abandoned more abruptly than Tofty," says Mills. "Tofty had a road system, while Coldfoot depended on dog sleds and horse-drawn river skiffs to bring in supplies from Bettles. A lot more organic artifacts were found at Coldfoot—leather straps, pieces of harness, shoes and fragments of cloth and canvas."

Fire destroyed most of the organic material at Tofty, but Mills says the lack of artifacts also fit with his abandonment scenario. "When ease of access exists, little in terms of artifacts remains."

The workers excavated the site of the post office at Tofty and four structures in Coldfoot. They included cabins, a store, and—based on the poker chips, broken whiskey bottles and women's garter belts they found—possibly a saloon or gambling hall.

They also excavated three trash pits and an outhouse. "Outhouses are actually good places to find artifacts because nobody is going to go in after the things they lose," Mills says.

The students hailed from Colorado, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, New York and Washington, in addition to Alaska, Mills says. It was a chance for them to hone their archeological techniques in the field while helping Mills research his doctoral thesis. This was the second year of field work at Coldfoot in cooperation with BLM.

The students signed on as volunteers with BLM, which provided transportation and other logistical support. Smith said Jack and Mary Neubauer, and Andy Miscovich, who hold the federal mining claims at Tofty and Coldfoot respectively, extended full cooperation to the project.

"Cultural resources is one area where we have established common ground with the miners," Smith says. "Everyone recognizes the need to preserve these resources and to learn more about our history."

—Andy Williams

"Outhouses are actually good places to find artifacts because nobody is going to go in after the things they lose."

—Robin Mills,
University of Alaska Fairbanks



Dan Gullickson

Robin Mills, a graduate student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, inspects a mine shaft sunk by early gold miners in Tofty.

Wanted: campground hosts



Edward Bovy

The Bureau of Land Management is looking for volunteers to work as campground hosts for the summer of 1996.

General duties of campground hosts can typically include answering questions, providing information, and explaining Wild and Scenic River use policy, as well as light maintenance, observing and recording visitor counts, and gathering visitor information. In campgrounds where fees are charged, the host encourages fee payment.

Campground hosts provide their own RV, motorhome, or trailer in which to live. BLM provides a host campsite, a daily stipend and mileage reimbursement. Campground life provides an interesting variety of travelers, the opportunity to be of assistance, and the thrilling experience of living under the midnight sun in one of Alaska's most attractive, remote locations. Make your plans now!

(above) Historic Eagle and Ft. Egbert on the banks of the Yukon River, is just one of several locations where you can spend your summer working for the BLM.

Hosts are needed at these campgrounds:

- Sourdough Creek Campground, mile 147 of the Richardson Highway, near Glennallen
- Paxson Lake Campground, mile 175 of the Richardson Highway, near Paxson
- Tangle Lake and Tangle River Campgrounds, mile 22 of the Denali Highway, also near Paxson

Contact Marcia Butorac, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Bureau of Land Management, Glennallen District, by writing to P.O. Box 147, Glennallen, Alaska 99588-0147, or calling (907) 822-3217.

- West Fork Campground, mile 49 of the Taylor Highway
- Walker Fork Campground, mile 82 of the Taylor Highway
- Eagle Campground, near Eagle.

Contact Jeff Roach, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Bureau of Land Management, Fortymile Area Team, by writing P.O. Box 309, Tok, Alaska 99780-0309, or calling (907) 883-5121.

BLM takes on new minerals responsibilities from the Bureau of Mines

On February 2, 1996, BLM's 85-year-old sister agency, the Bureau of Mines, was abolished in a national cost-saving measure. More than 1,200 employees were separated permanently in a major Reduction in Force, but 700 employees survived in several locations including Pittsburgh, Albany (Oregon), and Spokane.

In Alaska, the BLM has assumed the minerals responsibilities of the Bureau of Mines. The 19 former Bureau of Mines employees in Alaska transferred (along with their property, records,

data and facilities) over to the BLM where they have been incorporated into the Division of Lands, Minerals and Resources in the Alaska State Office in Anchorage. Here they will continue working on their existing projects while bringing valuable expertise and skills to the BLM minerals program. BLM will honor the interagency agreements made by the former bureau.

Donald Baggs will serve as the team leader for the Anchorage (Northern) Mineral Resources team which has eight members. Currently this team is working on a minerals assessment for the Chugach National Forest.

R. David Carnes leads the 11-member Juneau (Southern) team which will remain at its current location on Mayflower Island near Douglas, Alaska. One of their current major projects is to inventory mines abandoned on the Tongass National Forest; this will likely take five or six years to complete.

These two efforts are typical of the type of studies authorized by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act which directed the agency to determine the oil, gas and mineral potential on all public lands in Alaska.

"We will be in contact with many of the BLM work teams to explain our competencies and the work we do," says Baggs. "We have a lot of mineral data, much in a Geographic Information System (GIS) format, and this will help future BLM management efforts."

Project activities during the early 1990s have included conducting mineral assessments of BLM in the Fortymile and Black River planning units, assessing the impacts of submarine tailings discharge from mining operations, helping conduct a minerals availability investigation of the former Soviet Union and inventorying mine hazards for the BLM and Forest Service.

BLM's Deputy State Director for Minerals, Lands and Resources Nolan Heath says, "These employees will be a valuable source of information for working out solutions to our existing mineral issues and for strategic planning."

—Edward Bovy

Highlights of Recent Bureau of Mines Activities Affecting Public Lands in Alaska

Colville Mining District Study (1991-1994). This study has resulted in the identification of major, new lead/zinc, barite, phosphate and coal deposits in a 16-million acre area north of the Brooks Range, including parts of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

Abandoned Mine Land Project (1993). These inventories have helped the BLM, Forest Service, National Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service identify and characterize hazards at mine sites on the public land. BOM also assisted in destroying abandoned explosives from seven locations.

Placer Effluent (1992). BOM documented the feasibility of technology that can be used by placer miners to meet clean water standards.

White Mountains Mineral Assessment (1988). Minerals data aided BLM in making informed land management decisions for this popular recreation area near Fairbanks.

Valdez Creek Mining District Study (1987-1990). This project provided important mineral information for the BLM's Southcentral Management Plan and described more than 200 mineral deposits, 19 of which were previously unknown.

frontier flashes

U.S. land patents for more than 2.1 million acres were granted to Native corporations and the State of Alaska during fiscal year 1995, according to figures released by the Bureau of Land Management.

To date, BLM has issued patents to 14.9 million acres of surveyed land to Native corporations, and 21.5 millions acres of unsurveyed lands are under interim conveyance. The patent is the formal government title to land and can only be given after an official survey of the property. Native corporations can receive title through interim conveyance, and the state through tentative approval for lands not yet adequately surveyed, but the patent provides the final legal document. Alaska's Native corporations are entitled to an additional 9.2 million acres under the Alaska Native claims Settlement Act.

Processing Native allotments continues to be a major priority. In fiscal year 1995, BLM completed applications for an additional 720

individual parcels. To date, 7,070 parcels have been surveyed and patented.

The State has so far received patent to 38.6 million acres of surveyed land, and 51 million acres of unsurveyed lands are under tentative approval. BLM must survey and patent an additional 14.8 million acres land granted by the Alaska Statehood Act.

▼
The BLM made direct payments of \$10.3 million to Alaska in 1994, while investing another \$70.3 million in services to the state.

The BLM receives revenue from a variety of activities on the public lands in Alaska, including fees from recreation, mineral extraction, and timber sales. In 1994, revenue from Alaska totaled \$7.8 million, which was shared with the State. Direct financial transfers to Alaska included \$4.9 million under the **Payment in Lieu of Taxes** program which compensates local

governments for lost property taxes.

The BLM also funds programs that benefit Alaska through a wide variety of services on public lands in the state including firefighting, mineral leasing and the upkeep of recreational facilities.

▼
The US Forest Service filed two applications to return approximately 8.94 acres of public lands to the **Tongass National Forest**.

The **Fish Creek Parcel** contains approximately 5 acres located 80 miles northeast of Ketchikan, while the **Farragut Bay Parcel** is made up of 3.94 acres located 80 miles east of Sitka.

Because the two parcels had been occupied earlier for homesite purposes, they were excluded from the Tongass National Forest. Homesite entries were never conveyed, however, and the proposed withdrawal restores these lands to national forest status.



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Editor/writer/design: Janet S. Malone

Technical assistance: Jim Mroczek

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